

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
2005-06 Annual Report
Research on the Institutions that Manage Violent Conflict

Project: The Dissent/Repression Nexus in the Middle East

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The Middle East is often said to be caught in a never-ending spiral of dissent and repression influencing almost all aspects of existence. This “dissent/repression nexus” is critical because the Middle East sits at the crossroads of three continents, contains vast reserves of natural resources, and its conflicts have spilled into other parts of the globe.

Despite the importance of the dissent/repression nexus as well as the significance of the Middle East, there has been little systematic study of conflict dynamics in the region. Much research has drawn on a single methodology -- event analysis, field research, or social surveys. Each study omits important aspects of the dissent/repression nexus.

To address these gaps, an interdisciplinary, multi-university team has set out to study the dissent/repression nexus in the Middle East. Some of their questions include:

- How do dissent and repression influence each another?
- What kinds of repression produce what kinds of dissent and vice versa?
- How are contentious activities influenced by the dominant forces of economic and political globalization?

The project focuses on several important Middle East countries -- Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait and Turkey -- from 1990 to the present. These locations make it possible to examine the process of transformational change, the relationship between individuals and social action, and the implications of cultural variation for conflict.

This project is supported by a three-year \$585,000 grant from the National Science Foundation’s Human Social Dynamics program on Agents of Change, as well as grants from the OSU College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Mershon Center.

Some results will be published in a special issue of *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. For more information, see the project website at <http://drnexus.osu.edu>.

Besides the principal investigators, this project involves the work of nine undergraduate and graduate students at Ohio State, University of Maryland, and Trinity University.